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A COMPARATIVE STUDY OF
ATTENDANCE IN THE SENIOR HIGH SCHOOLS OF THE
OMAHA SCHOOL DISTRICT FOR 1974-75 AND 1975-76

A Field Project
Presented to
the Graduate Faculty of the
University of Nebraska at Omaha

In Partial Fulfillment
of the Requirements for the Degree
Specialist in Education

by
Robert L. Whitehouse

August 1976

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Nebraska at Omaha, in partial fulfillment of the requirements
for the Specialist in Education Degree.

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

Poor student attendance is one of the greatest problems facing most schools in the country today. Omaha is no exception. Absence figures have grown at an alarming rate in recent years. In 1974-75 there were 180,649 absences in the eight Omaha Public senior high schools.

Truants and others who are habitually absent are often considered to be non-conformers. It seems true that non-conformers, more than conformers, hold part-time jobs, own cars, "hang around," and smoke. These students also have generally lower vocational ambitions, shorter educational plans, and dislike school more than those who attend school regularly.

Because of these factors and the large number of absences, administrators responsible for attendance in the senior high schools of Omaha felt an effort to lower this high rate of absenteeism should be made to impress upon students and their parents the importance of regular attendance. The feelings of the administrators were implemented when the Omaha School Board of Education also became concerned and put their stamp of approval on a twelve day attendance policy designed to improve attendance in the schools.

The following statements were compiled from several sources and disseminated by Assistant Superintendent Rene Hlavac as guidelines for all the Omaha high schools to follow in the fall of 1975 in relationship to student absences.

1. A student who is not present during a class session will be marked absent on the teacher's record.
2. A student who has been absent from a class session must show cause for that absence upon returning to the class. This may be done in one of the following ways:
 - A. A signed note by the parent or legal guardian stating an acceptable reason for the absence; or,
 - B. By the presentation of a written explanation prepared by a medical doctor or dentist; or,
 - C. By presenting an appropriate class admit indicating the student's participation in a school activity.
3. A student's home will be contacted each time he is deemed absent from school unless the school has prior knowledge for the absence.
4. A student whose name does not appear on the daily absence list and who is absent from a class session without prior excuse according to school policy shall be deemed "truant" and the parent or legal guardian will be contacted.
- *5. A parental conference will be held after the student has missed five, ten, and twelve class sessions. Written documentation of this conference will become part of the student's cumulative file.
6. A student who is absent from twelve class sessions in a particular subject in his program will be considered to be failing in that subject for the semester regardless of the grade average.
7. Any and all appeals as a result of a failing grade related to this policy must be made by the classroom teacher of the class or classes involved to the building principal.
- * The parental conference to be held after five, ten, and twelve class absences will be initiated by the student's counselor and should include the classroom teacher of the class or classes involved. A telephone conference or a written communication may be substituted for the parental conference in the event the counselor and teacher feel a more formal arrangement is not necessary. In any event, there must be clear documentation that the contacts outlined in this policy were made. The housekeeping procedure for this documentation is left to the discretion of the individual school.¹

¹"Omaha Public Schools Senior High School Attendance Policy 1975-76" (mimeographed).

I. STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

The purpose of the study was to compare the results of the revised 1975-76 attendance policy in the Omaha Public Schools with the more traditional attendance policy in effect in 1974-75 at the senior high level. The study also was designed to investigate the attitudes of the high school administrators who were responsible for administering the attendance policy to determine whether they considered the policy had accomplished its purpose.

II. HYPOTHESIS

It was assumed the attendance of high school youngsters would increase in a positive way if students were given a clear understanding that a severe penalty would be imposed on any absences after twelve days, thus improving attendance.

III. DEFINITION OF TERMS

Absenteeism - Not being present during a class or during the entire day.

Average Daily Attendance - The term ADA is used to indicate the number of students who are in attendance each day.

Average Daily Membership - The term ADM is used to indicate the average number of students who are actually listed on the school rolls.

Attendance - Refers to daily class scheduled presence.

Excused Absences - Absence of a student is confirmed or verified by a parent or guardian, or by a physician substantiating an illness, and other unique, reasonable, confirmed reasons.

Parent Contact - A teacher, counselor, or administrator communicating with a student's parent by telephone, letter, or personal conference.

Referral Card - The form used to report student actions to the principal's office that are of concern to a staff member, be it behavior or attendance.

Truant - A student not present in school and whose whereabouts are unknown by his parents.

Twelve Day Limit - The number of days a student may miss before he is in jeopardy of receiving a failing grade or being removed from a specific class.

IV. LIMITATIONS

This study was limited to a comparison of the attendance of high school students for the years 1974-75 and 1975-76 in the eight senior high schools of the Omaha Public School System. Data was provided by the Area Data Center of the Omaha Public Schools.

V. PROCEDURE

Each of the principals and assistant principals responsible for the attendance program in each of the eight senior high schools in the Omaha Public Schools was asked to state his opinion concerning the new attendance policy through an opinionnaire.

Each semester's attendance was compared as it was provided by the Area Data Center. Final data was available on July 1, 1976, to make a complete year analysis. The data was analyzed to determine what, if any, difference the policy had made in the attendance of pupils in the eight senior high schools.

CHAPTER II

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

The question of school attendance or rather student non-attendance is somewhat an old one. In 1933 Hicks wrote that, "fifty percent of all absences is due to illness."² It then would be reasonable to assume that the remaining fifty percent of the absences were illegitimate or in violation of the law. The percentage of absence from school tends to increase with the age of the child. In the high schools of most large cities, the average rate of absence is ten percent. In the inner-core areas of large cities the average rate of absence is even higher, especially among those residents who are classed as being members of the lower socio-economic class.

Factors leading to truancy are many and varied. School officials generally recognize that no two truant youngsters have identical problems, nor are the same pupils necessarily truant at the same time for the same reason or reasons; but most truants are viewed as possible dropouts from school.

Gordon T. Morris, a public relations specialist for the Detroit News, stated in an article that "...today's truant is simply a product of our frantic modern society."³ He seems to be less inclined to accept the laws of his youth culture, including "never trust anybody over 30." The

²A.D. Hicks, "School Attendance," Educational Research Bulletin, September, 1933, Vol. 3, p. 249.

³G.T. Morris, "The Truant," Today's Education, Vol. 61, 1972, p. 41.

young truant has more money and more freedom and he is upset with the world today. Morris concluded that, "Poverty, long cited as a cause of truancy, is less a factor today."⁴ He took note of the generally existing permissive school regulations which have diminished youth's need for expensive clothing and other evidence of affluence. Where once a new dress or sport coat was a must, blue jeans may now suffice. Today's kids are looking for "kicks" and kicks too often mean drug abuse. The current drug culture is doing more than its share to increase truancy, directly or indirectly.

It was pointed out by Morris that today's truant is unlike any other in our nation's history, "they no longer spend hooky time going to a ball game, fishing or taking a dip in the old swimming hole."⁵ He indicated that many school officials and police officials often tied the truant into crime or criminal activities. Truants are usually considered to be non-conformers. Powell and Bergen, in their recent study, found that conformers liked school better, had higher vocational ambitions and "longer" educational plans.⁶

Research by Reis and Rhodes found that delinquents and truants were more likely to quit school and get a job than they were to quit school because they regarded compulsory school attendance as coercive.⁷

With the variety of data that the aforementioned authors have

⁴Ibid., p. 42.

⁵Ibid., p. 42.

⁶M. Powell and J. Bergen, "An Investigation of the Difference Between Tenth, Eleventh and Twelfth Grade 'Conforming' and 'Non-Conforming' Boys," Journal of Education Research, 1962, Vol. 56, p. 184.

⁷A. J. Reis and A. L. Rhodes, "Are Educational Norms and Goals of Conforming Truants and Delinquent Adolescents Influenced by Group Position in American Society," Journal of Negro Education, 1959, Vol. 28, No. 3, p. 252.

compiled it seems to be essential that schools re-evaluate the conditions in their districts and provide help oriented programs to alleviate the situation.

Because of the extensive absenteeism problem existing in almost every part of the country, the National Association of Secondary School Principals reported on a study with the following findings:

1. Cycles of absenteeism. Wednesday and Thursday have the lowest incidence of absenteeism. Absenteeism increased noticeably beginning the third week of school and continued to increase thereafter. When half-day sessions were scheduled (immediately prior to Thanksgiving and Christmas vacations), absenteeism rose to nearly forty percent. Absenteeism fell off drastically during the mid-semester and final exam periods.
2. Age. As students became older their incidence of absenteeism increased.
3. Grade level and sex. Freshmen, sophomore, and junior boys had consistently fewer absences than their girl counterparts. It was not until the senior year that this trend altered direction.
4. Parental employment. Students with both parents unemployed had the highest incidence of absenteeism while those with both parents working had the lowest.
5. Number of parents at home. Students who lived with both parents had a lesser tendency to be absent than those who lived with only one parent or guardian.
6. I. Q. Scores. Generally, as I. Q. scores increased, the rate of absenteeism decreased. The one deviation in this pattern was with students in the 80-89 I. Q. range.
7. Program of study. Students in certain general "tracks" had differing absenteeism rates. In this study, college preparatory students had the lowest absentee rate and general students had the highest.
8. School activities. It would appear that students who participated in extra-curricular activities were absent less than those who did not.

9. Class rank. Rank in class (seniors only) tended to correspond with the rate of absenteeism. Students at the top academically missed the fewest days.
10. Student personality. Two personality factors--personal responsibility and consideration of others--were examined because they appeared to indicate personality patterns that might be related to absenteeism. The ratings were provided by four or more of each student's teachers. As the rating categories increased in value (1 was low, 5 was high) group absenteeism levels decreased.⁸

The following article which appeared in the Nation's Schools and Colleges described an attendance policy at a Michigan high school in Ferndale, Michigan. It compared a new system of attendance with the previous traditional one and pointed out the advantages as well as the disadvantages of the new system. The article began with this typical note from a parent:

"Dear Teacher: Eileen was absent yesterday because she had a sore throat."

Customary as notes like this are in most schools, they are a thing of the past at Ferndale, Michigan, High School. And, since the notes were dropped last fall, absenteeism has dropped as well.

Under Ferndale's revised attendance policy, students in grades ten to twelve may be absent up to twelve days per semester from any particular class without bringing written excuses from their parents. Reasons for missing school must be legitimate, however; illness, personal or family problems, or doctors' appointments that cannot be scheduled during off-school hours. The catch is, if a student is absent twelve days or more, he loses credit for the course.

Basically, the system in Ferndale works like this: When a student has been absent four times from a course, the teacher mails a form to the student's parents informing them of the number of absences and indicating what could happen if the absenteeism continues. After eight absences, another form goes home. At this point, the student's counselor holds a conference with the parents to reinforce the twelve-absences

⁸National Association of Secondary Principals, NASSP Spotlight Newsletter, December, 1975.

message. If the student reaches twelve absences, a third form is sent stating that the child will not get credit for the course.⁹

When a student at Ferndale forfeits credit, he or she has three choices; to remain in the class and earn a "W" which does not affect grade point average, to drop the class and attend a study hall taking a grade of "E," the "E" changes the student's overall standing, or to file a written appeal for extension of absences.

Under the third option, if the parents and student thought there were legitimate reasons for extending the number of absences, they could appeal jointly within seven days to a faculty committee which decided whether the extension should be granted. Although Ferndale has occasionally had a problem with parents who thought their child should get credit despite excessive absences--because he was a good student and did well on exams--the school held firmly to the belief that the student must complete his school work satisfactorily and also maintain a reasonably good attendance record.

Nicholas Cannici, Ferndale's assistant principal who developed the new attendance system, stated:

"We tell students the absences are like money in the bank; if you spend them foolishly, by skipping for instance, and then you get ill and need more than the allotted days, you probably will lose credit for the course."¹⁰

Generally, teachers had no way of knowing who was skipping and who was legitimately absent until the parent conference when the reasons were discussed. Some students skipped not because of the liberal absence policy, notes Cannici, but because school turned them off. Many of these

⁹Nicholas Cannici, "Administration--No Excuses," Nation's Schools and Colleges, January, 1975, p. 14.

¹⁰Ibid., p. 14.

students had been known to accumulate their twelve absences within the first few weeks of school.

"In spite of this small group of 'skippers,' total absenteeism at Ferndale has dropped from an average of twelve to fifteen percent last year to only seven or eight percent this year," Cannici reports.¹¹

By and large, the community, students, parents and teachers have received the absence policy well, he adds. As one student remarked;

"This is much better than the old way, it gives us responsibility, and that is what education is all about."

The system has one major drawback, however, a significant increase in paperwork which teachers and counselors must complete.

"We do not know how to get around that problem right now," Cannici says, "but we do know we have a better record of student attendance and we keep parents better informed than ever before."

According to Jerald G. Bachman in his article, "Dropouts are Losers," dropping out of high school is overrated as a problem in its own right. Actually, it is the end result or symptom of other problems originating much earlier in life.¹²

Most dropouts experience difficulties, to be sure. Their aspirations, accomplishments and self-esteem are usually below average. But most of these limitations are already present or predictable by the start of the tenth grade and there is little evidence that dropping out makes matters worse.

The conclusion by Bachman that dropouts lose in a variety of ways, stems from results of a nationwide study called "Youth in Transition," conducted by the Institute for Social Research, under a contract with the United States Office of Education.

¹¹Ibid., p. 14.

¹²Jerald G. Bachman, "Dropouts are Losers Says Who," Today's Education, Vol. 61, No. 4, April, 1972, p. 28.

It was found in the study that problems of dropping out of school often involved a serious mismatch between some individuals and the typical high school environment. More specifically, dropping out was symptomatic of certain background and ability characteristics, school experiences and traits of personality and behavior.

Most important among the family background factors was socio-economic level; the lower the level the more likely a boy or girl was to become a dropout. Dropping out was more frequent among boys from large families or from broken homes; it also occurred more frequently among those reporting a high level of parental punitiveness.

It might not be surprising to find that boys who later became dropouts tended to score below average on the tests of intelligence and academic ability.

According to the study, poor grades and failures may simply be indicators of a more fundamental inability, or unwillingness, to do well in an academic setting. If so, removing those symptoms might do little to change dropout rates. But it may be that such events have a tendency to function as self-fulfilling prophecies, with both the student and his teacher coming to feel that, "he just isn't cut out for schoolwork." In addition, the failure experience in school may lead to feelings of shame and eventually precipitate "fight" and/or "flight" reactions, including dropping out.

It has already been noted that youths who became dropouts were more likely to have a background of delinquency, the study included several measures of rebellious behavior in school and delinquent behavior both in and outside school. The results consistently indicated that the boy who was likely to drop out was well above average in rebellious and

delinquent behavior by the time he entered high school.¹³

Over the past few decades it has generally been a part of the educational policy to try to prevent youth from dropping out of high school. One part of this policy has been to offer a variety of educational enrichments added to curriculum for those not headed for college. Efforts, sometimes funded under federal programs for dropout prevention, were often rather valuable and worth continuing, quite apart from whether or not they led to lower dropout rates.

But another less fortunate aspect of the dropout prevention effort has been a massive advertising campaign by the Health, Education and Welfare Department on radio and television. This is called the "anti-dropout campaign," a term deliberately selected for its double meaning. The campaign was intended to prevent dropping out, but its effect was often to criticize and ridicule dropouts.

According to the "Youth In Transition" study, as was noted earlier, dropping out is a symptom which signifies a mismatch between the individual and the typical high school environment. In principle, the mismatch could be resolved by, (a) changing the individual so that he is better able to fit into the high school environment, (b) change the high school environment, or (c) changing both. There is room for change on both sides.¹⁴

Among the important elements in the mismatch between potential dropouts and the high school environment are individual limitations in academic ability, past scholastic failure, and patterns of delinquent behavior. These are not problems that are likely to be resolved by persuading a young man to remain through the last year or two of high

¹³Ibid., p. 29.

¹⁴Ibid., p. 30.

school. But early intervention, in elementary school and perhaps even earlier, may overcome many of the problems which are deeply ingrained by the time an individual is ready to drop out.

In a review of the kinds of literature which is relevant to a study such as this, it is important to look at both sides of the picture. Bearing this in mind, the author, John R. Hoback, a principal at Boulder, Colorado, High School took a somewhat negative view on attendance problems.

"A traditional authoritarian approach to attendance problems can't work in today's schools. A successful attendance program needs to be based on positive reinforcement making each student feel needed, wanted, and involved in his own education."¹⁵

The following are excerpts of what Hoback believes the problems of attendance are:

"Social agencies or institutions such as juvenile courts, welfare boards, and legislatures see the schools as custodial institutions designed to keep students off the streets or out of the labor market. How many juvenile courts will "sentence" the young offender to go to school? How many merchants will criticize the school if shoplifting occurs during school hours?

Many parents want the schools to do what they are unable or unwilling to do with their children, thus creating a double standard. The problem is compounded by the multiple standards that now exist in many communities, ranging from the rigid patriarchal family to the completely permissive commune. Such a multiplicity of norms requires the schools to constantly appraise and justify their policies and practices.

Mediocre (or worse) teachers are dependent upon impersonal rules and an authoritarian administration to provide them with captive audiences. Truancy may be one indication of a teacher's ineffectiveness.

Society's demands are unrealistic that the high school be comprehensive and meet the needs of one hundred percent of the nation's youth. Also the credentialism, which implies that there is some magic in a high school diploma, is ridiculous."¹⁶

¹⁵John R. Hoback, "Problems of Attendance," National Association of Secondary School Principals Bulletin, February 1976, pp. 23-24.

¹⁶Ibid., pp. 25-26.

An authoritarian and paternalistic philosophy was the kind of philosophy which most of the present generation received as its education. The following premises were based on the traditional attendance approach.

The school is totally responsible for the student during specified hours. If the student is not present and accounted for, the parent is to be notified immediately.

Attendance is an end in itself.

Students found to be guilty of truancy will be penalized, either by suspension, expulsion, or having their grades lowered. This is usually accomplished by an impersonal formula.

Education does not occur except when a student is present in class.

The adolescent does not have the maturity of judgment to make the "right" decision voluntarily.¹⁷

Some of the problems the traditional system created, however, make its validity questionable according to Hoback.

Achievement is measured primarily in terms of time spent in class (or time endured as the case may be). Instead of establishing achievement criteria in terms of behavioral outcomes, anecdotal descriptions of achievements, or comprehensive standardized measurements, we almost universally use such vague guesstimates as "years in school," or "credit hours," Carnegie units, or "high school diploma." Along with the subjectively granted letter grade, time is the primary language used to measure learning.

We encourage dependency and immaturity in the student. He feels no sense of commitment or responsibility and is eager to get away with whatever he can.

We create a climate of adversary game-playing between students and administration.

We all too often penalize the honest student or the student with honest parents, while the liars and cheats beat the system.

An inordinate amount of staff time (clerical, administrative, and counseling) is spent in the "busy-work" of hassling

¹⁷Ibid., p. 26.

all students instead of focusing major efforts on helping the student who has problems.¹⁸

What are the ramifications of social aspects of attendance problems? Most pupil personnel problems are the result of irresponsible parents and unstable homes.

The home generally has stronger influence on the student than the school. Some homes are unstable and mentally unhealthy environments. Society has indeed changed; so that almost half the adolescents are not living with both natural parents or near to other relatives; so that it is increasingly difficult for adolescents to find positions of responsibility and worth in the family or in the community; so that authoritarianism has dramatically diminished in the home, in the military, in law enforcement and in business organization.

Running an authoritarian school in a non-authoritarian society is an anachronism which impairs the credibility of the leader. Thus, another social malaise with which schools must cope is the general distrust of leadership.¹⁹

Yet another aspect of the social and legal change with which senior high schools must cope is the newly acquired majority status of 18 year olds. These young adults are often justifiably resentful of what they consider paternalism and illogical attendance policies.

Finally, the diminishing of the family as a strong social unit has a seriously harmful effect on the mental health of both parents and adolescents.

A generation ago the educator, teacher or principal, could get away with such standard phrases as, "Do this because I say so. You don't

¹⁸Ibid., p. 27.

¹⁹Ibid., p. 28.

need another reason;" or, "This is the way it is. If you don't like it, get out." The majority of parents then would say, "If you get in trouble at school you will be in double trouble when you get home."

In 1976, the educator must negotiate with the student and be certain he has provided appropriate due process. Even then the parent is apt to say, "If those fascists at school pick on you, we'll get an attorney and sue."²⁰

Research has indicated that throughout the country attendance has been and will continue to be a source of trouble for school administrators. However, with student motivation, understanding, and a good public relations program, school administrators can continue to work to improve the situation.

²⁰Ibid., p. 28.

CHAPTER III

PROCEDURES

The attendance program described in this chapter reflects the opinions, experiences, and judgments of administrators in the Omaha Senior High Schools charged with initiating an attendance procedure compatible with a common operating system which could be used effectively in each high school building--a new policy for meeting expeditiously and simply, the more recent trends and complexities of student attendance in light of court decisions and super-imposed organizational guidelines.

An atmosphere of student permissiveness or irresponsibility lingered over many student bodies concerning school attendance in the past few years to the point that many high school youth felt they were "getting away with" something by indulging in periodic class skipping or full-day truanancies. This seeming "reversionary" value attitude on the part of many students prompted administrators in Omaha to recommend the revision of the traditional attendance policies which might effectively and efficiently meet conditions in 1976.

Under the old policy there were many students, "hangers-on," who missed as many as thirty or forty days of school and would still be carried on the teachers' class rolls. These conditions led to administrative dismay and consequent brain-storming sessions to find methods of solving the problem. After informal discussions, most of the senior high principals in the early summer of 1974-75 sat down together and developed a set of recommendations to be made to the central administration

that might be followed by high school principals during the next fall term. The Central Office Administrators agreed to consider the proposals of the principals. After further discussions of the ramifications and with constructive criticisms, Dr. Rene Hlavac, Assistant Superintendent in charge of Pupil Personnel, accepted the proposals and submitted the new policies to the Superintendent, Dr. Owen Knutzen, who approved the changes recommended by the principals for implementation at the opening of the school year in September, 1975.

As a result of these efforts and with few modifications, there evolved what is called the Twelve Day Absence Policy. The policy was adopted by the Board of Education to standardize the regulations governing attendance and tardiness in the Omaha Public School system.

The purpose of the program was to provide a stronger support system for the student and to establish better lines of communication between the home and the school.

Basically, the concept was for all the Omaha high schools to follow the same structured pattern concerning student absence. However, the program and the way it was administered varied slightly from building to building. For example, Tech High's approach may have been somewhat different from Burke High's, but in general, a similar approach was used at each of the eight Omaha high schools. The South High program was used in this study as representative of the program in the other schools.

It was most important at the onset to emphasize the significance of positive support and attitudes relative to a new policy. Persons concerned with each phase of the policy were familiarized with the so-called "rules and regulations" governing the various kinds of requirements. Orientation with staff members and communication with students was the

single most important factor in implementing the new policy.

Public relations played a big part in the acceptance of the new idea that involved everyone. Administrators had to be certain that teachers understood the importance of accountability in not only classroom work but also in regular attendance.

It was also the responsibility of administrators to see that the entire student body was cognizant of any change. The new program was described and delineated in several ways. One of the most common was by use of the P. A. system in each individual school. Reinforcement of the attendance policy was necessary from time to time to remind students of the change in regulations. Statements were included in writing in handbooks as well as flyers so that all students saw the information in print. The following is an excerpt from the South High School Student Handbook in regard to attendance:

Regular attendance is of utmost importance if a student expects to receive a creditable grade, or perhaps, even to pass a course. In other words, if a student has an excessive number of absences, he is not likely to receive credit in that course. Students are prevented from mastering the courses involved when absent from the classroom.

A student who misses twelve days in any class during a semester will be withdrawn from that class and placed in a study hall unless the absence has resulted from an extended illness or extenuating circumstances, the validity of such circumstances to be determined by school authorities.

If a student is absent from school twelve days, it is possible he or she will be withdrawn from school. Each case will be reviewed on an individual basis, and all due-process procedures will be followed by school authorities for withdrawal from either class or school. A parent or guardian will be notified at least twice before the twelfth absence by one of the following methods; (1) telephone call, (2) written letter from a teacher, counselor, or administrator, or (3) conference at school.

Twelve tardies in any one semester at the beginning of the school day may result in a student being withdrawn from school for the current semester.

A student who arrives in the building after the 8:10 bell through 8:30 is to report to the administrator at the tardy desk located in the main entrance. Here he will sign in and receive a tardy slip for an admit to class. After 8:30, all tardy students will sign in with their respective counselor and report immediately to the class or study period then in session.

If a student is tardy and was absent the day before, he should report directly to his counselor for an admit.

Students who are absent from school are required to submit to their counselor a written excuse which must be signed by their parent or guardian. After the student has signed in, he will be given an admit card to classes from his counselor. The admit card must be presented to each teacher whose class the student missed.

In the case of an excused absence, students are to make up the work as soon as possible. It is the responsibility of the student to ask for the make-up work and to complete this make-up work to the satisfaction of the instructor. Parents may request that a student be absent from school or to keep a student home from school. However, it should be understood that the school will determine whether or not the absence is to be excused or unexcused. A grade of zero is given for unexcused absences. Such reasons as job application, drivers' license test, etc., which can be scheduled other than during class time are examples of unexcused absences.²¹

Other means, such as newspaper articles in the city edition of the World Herald helped to alert parents to the new system. Local school papers were also used to remind students from time to time of any revisions that had taken place.

The absence policy system is self explanatory; that any student who misses more than twelve days during a semester is likely to lose credit unless there are extenuating circumstances. The validity of each case is left to the judgment of the administration. However, before a student misses twelve days and is removed from a class, the parents are notified. After the fifth absence, parents are called and are informed

²¹South High School Student Handbook, Omaha, 1975 (A publication prepared by the administrative staff and student council at South High School), p. 4.

about the current policy. This may be done either by a teacher, counselor or administrator.

A yellow card, called an absence referral card, was devised at South High School so that notation could be recorded each time contact was made with the parent.²² The contact by the teacher was noted, what the reasons for the absence were and with whom the contact was made; mother, father or other relative. A letter was usually sent on the tenth absence explaining the situation.²³ If a parental conference had not taken place by the twelfth absence, the administrator set up a conference with the parent and student. It was pointed out in the conference that the likelihood of the youngster receiving credit for course work was slim if the work had not been made up for the days missed. Finally, in accordance with due process, a probationary letter was sent to each parent of students who missed more than the twelve days, if there was just cause for the student to still be carried on the rolls. The probationary letter again reinforced what had been communicated in prior contacts.

Often, when new rules, policies, or regulations are enacted, exceptions arise. The exception to this generally comes in the form of protests by teachers who wish to grant credit to students who have missed more than the twelve days for legitimate reasons.

As the program progressed, it became obvious that there was a need for adjustment in the actual twelve day limit. Because of the number of illness cases attributed to the flu during the second semester of 1975-76, the actual absences were probably higher than may be expected in future years.

²²See example, Appendix A.

²³See example, Appendix B.

Many teachers thought there were several youngsters who had earned the opportunity to pass even though they had surpassed the allotted days of absence. Thus, an appeal system was set up to allow for this consideration. If a teacher knew the circumstances for the students absence; legitimate sickness, death in the family, emergency needs at home or other acceptable reasons and the student made up the missed work, then an appeal on behalf of the student was made by the teacher to an administrator for final consideration. The decision of the administrator was based on the actual number of days missed, the number of suspensions or referrals on file, the number of unexcused absences and the legitimacy of the excuses. If a student's absences fell into many of these catagories, chances were the appeal would not warrant approval. If the appeal to award the student a passing grade was granted, then the form with the perforated card was so checked and returned to the teacher. The other half of the copy was kept for office records. The form contained the subject, the number of times the student missed that particular class, and the date of the appeal. All appeals came at the end of the semester.

The completed processes involved the student, parents, teachers, counselors and administrators in helping to curb the absence problems.

CHAPTER IV

ANALYSIS AND INTERPRETATION OF THE DATA

I. INTRODUCTION

The purpose of this chapter is to present and analyze the data obtained from an opinionnaire which was sent to all senior high administrators in Omaha concerning the twelve day attendance policy, as described in Chapter III. It was also designed to compare the data at the end of each semester of 1974-75 with the data under the newly adopted policy of 1975-76.

II. OPINIONNAIRE

Shortly before the end of the first semester of 1975-76, an opinionnaire was sent to all the Omaha Public School secondary building administrators, both principals and assistant principals, asking what they thought about the new attendance procedures.²⁴

Only one of the eight principals did not respond to the opinionnaire, of the assistant principals polled all but four responded.

²⁴See Appendix C (complete opinionnaire).

TABLE I

RESPONSES OF PRINCIPALS AND ASSISTANT PRINCIPALS TO AN
OPINIONNAIRE REGARDING OMAHA PUBLIC SCHOOL'S 1975-76 ATTENDANCE POLICY

QUESTION	PRINCIPALS				ASSISTANT PRINCIPALS					
	Yes	%	No	%	Yes	%	Some	%	No	%
The Omaha Public Schools have attempted to standardize high school policies governing attendance. With regard to your building, do you think it is a good policy?	7	100	-	---	19	95	--	--	1	5
Do you think the policy has established better lines of communication between home and school?	5	71.4	2	28.6	14	73.7	--	--	2	26.3
Do you find yourself spending more time with attendance?	4	51.2	3	42.8	13	65	5	25	2	10
Do you think the majority of your student body is aware of the policy by now?	7	100	-	---	11	100	--	--	-	--
In your dealings with the faculty about this attendance policy, do you think they favor it?	7	100	-	---	14	70	5	25	1	5
In your opinion, do you believe student attendance will increase because of the adopted policy?	6	85.7	1	14.3	10	50	10	50	-	--

According to the results of the opinionnaire, the administrators responsible for carrying out the attendance program seemed to be overwhelmingly in favor of the new policy. Twenty-six of the twenty-seven polled thought the new policy was a good one in relationship to their building. Each administrator who responded thought that the majority of the students in their respective schools were aware of the newly founded policy. In comments made by several of the respondent administrators, suggestions about the policy and its implementation were voiced. One assistant principal wondered if the time spent on attendance was worth the end result. Other comments ranged from "too much paper work," to "it's a great policy."

One of the factors which may have altered the absenteeism rate during second semester was the flu strain epidemic which occurred in March, 1976. An epidemic can cause an unusual imbalance in attendance and statistics should be re-evaluated in future studies. The following article which appeared in the World Herald illustrates this point.

According to United Press International from Atlanta, Georgia, the National Center for Disease Control (CDS) announced the nation's most extensive influenza epidemic in eight years started to wane after 2,321 deaths. Despite the decline in the number of cases, the CDS said deaths attributed to pneumonia and influenza in 121 major U.S. cities rose slightly during the week ended March 14, to 552 deaths. The current flu strain, A-Victoria, has hit in all of the fifty states. A survey conducted by the CDS of state health departments on March 11, 1976, showed the influenza remained at epidemic levels in twenty-one states. Twenty-one other states reported regional out-breaks and eight listed isolated cases.²⁵

²⁵United Press International, Omaha World Herald, March 25, 1976.

III. DATA COMPARED BY SCHOOLS

The Area Data Center of the Omaha Public Schools, located at 4469 Farnam Street in Omaha, Nebraska, provided statistical material contained in this section of the report. The cooperation from all personnel at the Data Center was most helpful in the analysis contained in this chapter. The following explanation shows how school attendance is recorded, calculated, and figured.

Average Daily Membership is determined by adding together the total number of students who at any time during the school year were carried on the rolls as members of the various classes without regard to whether they were in attendance or not. This accumulated total number of students, who were carried on the class rolls as members, is then divided by the number of days of school to arrive at an average daily membership.

Average Daily Attendance is determined by adding together all the class members who were actually in attendance in school each day and dividing the total thus acquired by the number of days of school.

Average Daily Absence is the difference between the average daily membership and the average daily attendance.

Since there is a variation in the numbers of students who attend each of the high schools in Omaha it is more meaningful to reduce the average daily attendance to a percent of the average daily membership and compare the attendance rate by comparing the percent of attendance in each school. In this way, the attendance can be compared from semester to semester, year to year or school to school without regard to the size of the student body.

The following data was analyzed by school for each of the eight senior high schools in the Omaha Public School system on a comparison by semesters.

BENSON HIGH SCHOOL

Benson High School, located at 5120 Maple Street in Omaha, has had a more stable enrollment since the opening of Northwest High in 1971. The community of Benson and the downtown Benson area still gives the school that small town atmosphere and pride that often goes with the two. Part of that pride, as represented in attendance, can be seen in Table II, as Benson had the second largest increase in student attendance during the second semester of 1975-76 of any of the other schools. This was an impressive statistic in lieu of the flu epidemic that hit most schools.

TABLE II

NUMBER OF STUDENTS IN AVERAGE DAILY MEMBERSHIP, AVERAGE DAILY ATTENDANCE, AVERAGE DAILY ABSENCE, AND PERCENT OF AVERAGE DAILY ATTENDANCE 1974-75 AND 1975-76 IN BENSON HIGH SCHOOL

YEAR	SEMESTER	AVERAGE DAILY MEMBERSHIP	AVERAGE DAILY ATTENDANCE	AVERAGE DAILY ABSENCE	PERCENT AVERAGE DAILY ATTENDANCE
1974-75	First	1651.44	1490.89	160.55	90.27
1975-76	First	1477.97	1367.25	110.72	92.51
1974-75	Second	1603.21	1434.25	168.96	89.46
1975-76	Second	1441.23	1324.32	116.91	91.89

In the first semester of 1975-76 under the revised attendance policy, an average of 49.83 or 2.24 percent more students were in attendance in Benson than under the traditional attendance policy which was in effect in 1974-75. An average of 42.05 or 2.43 percent more students attend each day in the second semester of 1975-76 than in a similar period in 1974-75.

BRYAN HIGH SCHOOL

Bryan High School is the only Omaha Public secondary school located outside Douglas County. The school which is situated in Sarpy County was opened in the fall of 1971. Growth in the area south and west of Omaha necessitated building the school at its present location. The school also relieved some of the enrollment pressure from South High School. Membership figures did not fluctuate much between 1974-75 and 1975-76 as can be seen in Table III.

TABLE III

NUMBER OF STUDENTS IN AVERAGE DAILY MEMBERSHIP, AVERAGE DAILY ATTENDANCE, AVERAGE DAILY ABSENCE, AND PERCENT AVERAGE DAILY ATTENDANCE FOR 1974-75 AND 1975-76 IN BRYAN HIGH SCHOOL

YEAR	SEMESTER	AVERAGE DAILY MEMBERSHIP	AVERAGE DAILY ATTENDANCE	AVERAGE DAILY ABSENCE	PERCENT AVERAGE DAILY ATTENDANCE
1974-75	First	1206.51	1120.77	85.74	92.89
1975-76	First	1219.71	1154.32	65.39	94.64
1974-75	Second	1180.21	1089.51	90.70	92.31
1975-76	Second	1183.33	1108.71	74.62	93.69

In the first semester of 1975-76, under the revised attendance policy, Bryan had an average of 20.35 more students, or 1.75 percent, better attendance than under the traditional policy in 1974-75. The same pattern followed for second semester with an increase of 16.08 more students, or 1.38 percent, better attendance than in 1974-75.

BURKE HIGH SCHOOL

Harry A. Burke High School is an Omaha Public comprehensive senior high school located in western suburban Omaha. Students who attend Burke generally come from middle to upper income families. The school operates on a modular or flexible scheduling program along with the opportunity for students to enroll in mini-courses and packaged courses. Because of family tradition, an emphasis is placed on education and a recognition of the importance of good attendance. Burke High has consistently been the top school in over-all student attendance as can be seen in Table IV.

TABLE IV

NUMBER OF STUDENTS IN AVERAGE DAILY MEMBERSHIP, AVERAGE DAILY ATTENDANCE, AVERAGE DAILY ABSENCE, AND PERCENT OF AVERAGE DAILY ATTENDANCE 1974-75 AND 1975-76 IN BURKE HIGH SCHOOL

YEAR	SEMESTER	AVERAGE DAILY MEMBERSHIP	AVERAGE DAILY ATTENDANCE	AVERAGE DAILY ABSENCE	PERCENT AVERAGE DAILY ATTENDANCE
1974-75	First	2036.14	1923.06	113.08	94.44
1975-76	First	2098.72	2014.29	84.43	95.98
1974-75	Second	1969.37	1847.86	121.51	93.83
1975-76	Second	2067.93	1969.25	98.68	95.23

Burke High School has continued to increase its membership and at the same time increase the percent of attendance. An average of 1.54 percent or 28.65 more students attended each day during the first semester of 1975-76 than during the same period of 1974-75. Second semester 1975-76 saw almost an equal increase with 1.40 percent and 22.83 more average student attendance.

CENTRAL HIGH SCHOOL

Central High School at 20th and Dodge Streets used to be the "old capital." Historical development has considered Central High to be primarily a college preparatory school. Regularly, sixty percent to seventy percent of its graduates proceed to post high school education, the larger percentage taking up college work. Central High School, like South High, maintained a somewhat constant average daily membership during the two years of this study. The membership varied only from 2031.88 to 2047.32 as indicated in Table V.

TABLE V

NUMBER OF STUDENTS IN AVERAGE DAILY MEMBERSHIP, AVERAGE DAILY ATTENDANCE, AVERAGE DAILY ABSENCE, AND PERCENT OF AVERAGE DAILY ATTENDANCE 1974-75 AND 1975-76 IN CENTRAL HIGH SCHOOL

YEAR	SEMESTER	AVERAGE DAILY MEMBERSHIP	AVERAGE DAILY ATTENDANCE	AVERAGE DAILY ABSENCE	PERCENT AVERAGE DAILY ATTENDANCE
1974-75	First	2031.88	1859.57	172.31	91.52
1975-76	First	2124.64	1969.36	155.28	92.67
1974-75	Second	1969.37	1799.30	170.07	91.36
1975-76	Second	2047.32	1889.59	157.73	92.30

Central High School showed an average increase of 17.03 more students or a 1.15 percent in regular attendance under the revised attendance policy of 1975-76 over the policy in effect in 1974-75. Second semester of the same time period showed a .94 percent increase or 12.34 more students attended each day.

NORTH HIGH SCHOOL

The area served by North High School, perhaps the most cosmopolitan school in the Omaha School District, represents almost all the ethnic and economic groups to be found in Omaha. Within the North attendance boundary lies urban, rural and commercial industrial land; people living in middle class comfort, at the poverty level and in affluence. Despite the many and varied differences in socio-economic groupings, North High had one of the largest percent of increases in average daily attendance of any of the high schools as is shown in Table VI.

TABLE VI

NUMBER OF STUDENTS IN AVERAGE DAILY MEMBERSHIP, AVERAGE DAILY ATTENDANCE, AVERAGE DAILY ABSENCE, AND PERCENT OF AVERAGE DAILY ATTENDANCE 1974-75 AND 1975-76 IN NORTH HIGH SCHOOL

YEAR	SEMESTER	AVERAGE DAILY MEMBERSHIP	AVERAGE DAILY ATTENDANCE	AVERAGE DAILY ABSENCE	PERCENT AVERAGE DAILY ATTENDANCE
1974-75	First	1757.43	1590.74	166.69	90.51
1975-76	First	1678.32	1565.55	112.77	93.28
1974-75	Second	1692.76	1536.23	156.53	90.75
1975-76	Second	1598.51	1477.57	120.94	92.43

It should be noted that the membership at North High decreased by 79.11 students from first semester of 1974-75 to 1975-76, but that the actual head count was up 53.92 or almost 54 more students each day. The increase of 2.77 percent first semester and 1.68 percent second semester was one of the highest increases of any of the schools in the two year study period in the district.

NORTHWEST HIGH SCHOOL

Northwest High School, located at 8204 Crown Point Avenue, was opened in the fall of 1971. It was originally built to relieve some of the over-crowding at Benson, Burke and North. Northwest, the newest of the Omaha Public high schools, was built in an area of fast housing expansion as Omaha continues to grow both north and west. The building was intended to house fourteen hundred students, but Table VII has indicated that memberships have surpassed that number already.

TABLE VII

NUMBER OF STUDENTS IN AVERAGE DAILY MEMBERSHIP, AVERAGE DAILY ATTENDANCE, AVERAGE DAILY ABSENCE, AND PERCENT OF AVERAGE DAILY ATTENDANCE 1974-75 AND 1975-76 IN NORTHWEST HIGH SCHOOL

YEAR	SEMESTER	AVERAGE DAILY MEMBERSHIP	AVERAGE DAILY ATTENDANCE	AVERAGE DAILY ABSENCE	PERCENT AVERAGE DAILY ATTENDANCE
1974-75	First	1418.95	1332.93	86.02	93.93
1975-76	First	1575.80	1493.37	82.43	94.77
1974-75	Second	1397.81	1304.47	93.34	93.32
1975-76	Second	1546.18	1451.75	94.43	93.89

Northwest High School had the smallest percent of increase in attendance of the eight high schools. However, it should be noted that they had one of the best attendance records already established in 1974-75 of 93.62 percent average daily attendance. It should also be pointed out that Northwest's membership increased by 156 students first semester 1975-76 and 148 during second semester. Taking into account the increased membership, Northwest students increased their average daily attendance by .84 percent and .57 percent for the respective semesters in 1975-76 over 1974-75.

SOUTH HIGH SCHOOL

South High School, located at 4519 South 24 Street, had one of the most stable attendance records of any of the Omaha schools in relationship to the number of students enrolled during each of the four semesters. As shown in Table VIII, student enrollment varied from 2263.70 in 1974-75 to 2212.10 at the end of 1975-76, a difference of 51.60 students in average daily membership. South showed an increase in daily attendance during both semesters in 1975-76 over the 1974-75 school year.

TABLE VIII

NUMBER OF STUDENTS IN AVERAGE DAILY MEMBERSHIP, AVERAGE DAILY ATTENDANCE, AVERAGE DAILY ABSENCE, AND PERCENT OF AVERAGE DAILY ATTENDANCE 1974-75 AND 1975-76 IN SOUTH HIGH SCHOOL

YEAR	SEMESTER	AVERAGE DAILY MEMBERSHIP	AVERAGE DAILY ATTENDANCE	AVERAGE DAILY ABSENCE	PERCENT AVERAGE DAILY ATTENDANCE
1974-75	First	2263.70	2097.86	165.84	92.67
1975-76	First	2259.26	2136.58	122.68	94.56
1974-75	Second	2225.17	2062.45	162.72	92.68
1975-76	Second	2212.10	2077.83	134.27	93.93

In the first semester of 1975-76, under the revised attendance policy, an average of 43.16 more students, or 1.89 percent, were in attendance at South High School than under the traditional attendance policy which was in effect in 1974-75. An average of 28.45 more students attended each day in the second semester of 1975-76 than in a similar period in 1974-75.

TECHNICAL HIGH SCHOOL

From 1912 when Tech was initiated to serve the vocational needs of the youth of Omaha until the present day, many factors have led to the changing patterns of attendance in the area. Creighton University and recent highway development, displacing many of the homes in the area, was one factor, mobility of population and defacto segregation along with changing attitudes was perhaps another factor. The decline in enrollment in Tech for its original purpose, similar to schools in other cities, has resulted in the school evolving into a magnet school which is part of all high schools in Omaha. The decline in enrollment from the 1,200 students in 1970 to the less than 500 in the first semester of 1975-76 can be observed in Table IX.

TABLE IX

NUMBER OF STUDENTS IN AVERAGE DAILY MEMBERSHIP, AVERAGE DAILY ATTENDANCE, AVERAGE DAILY ABSENCE, AND PERCENT OF AVERAGE DAILY ATTENDANCE 1974-75 AND 1975-76 IN TECH HIGH SCHOOL

YEAR	SEMESTER	AVERAGE DAILY MEMBERSHIP	AVERAGE DAILY ATTENDANCE	AVERAGE DAILY ABSENCE	PERCENT AVERAGE DAILY ATTENDANCE
1974-75	First	486.72	409.38	77.34	84.11
1975-76	First	558.41	497.44	60.97	89.08
1974-75	Second	478.42	395.71	82.71	82.61
1975-76	Second	558.46	492.85	65.61	88.25

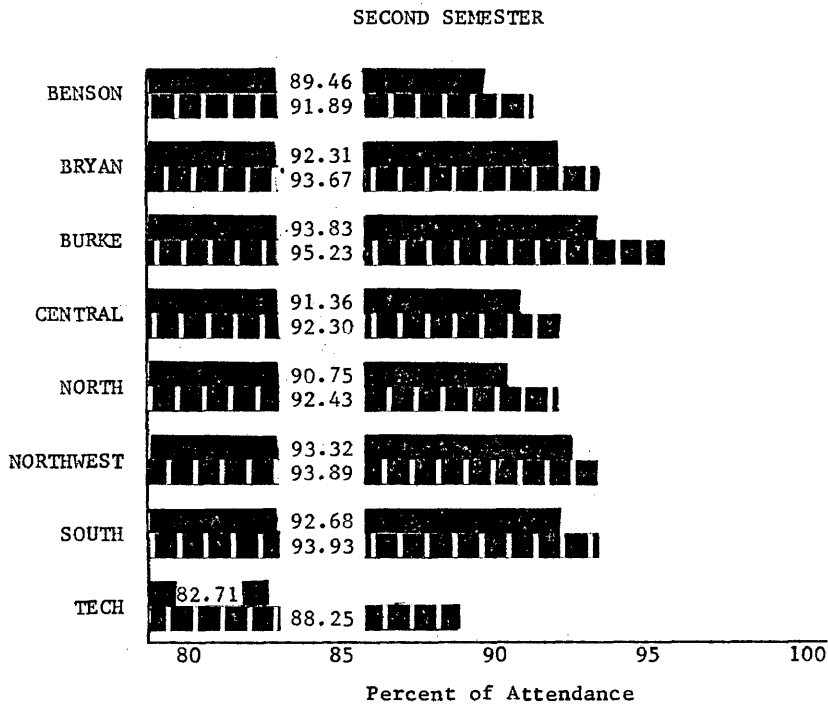
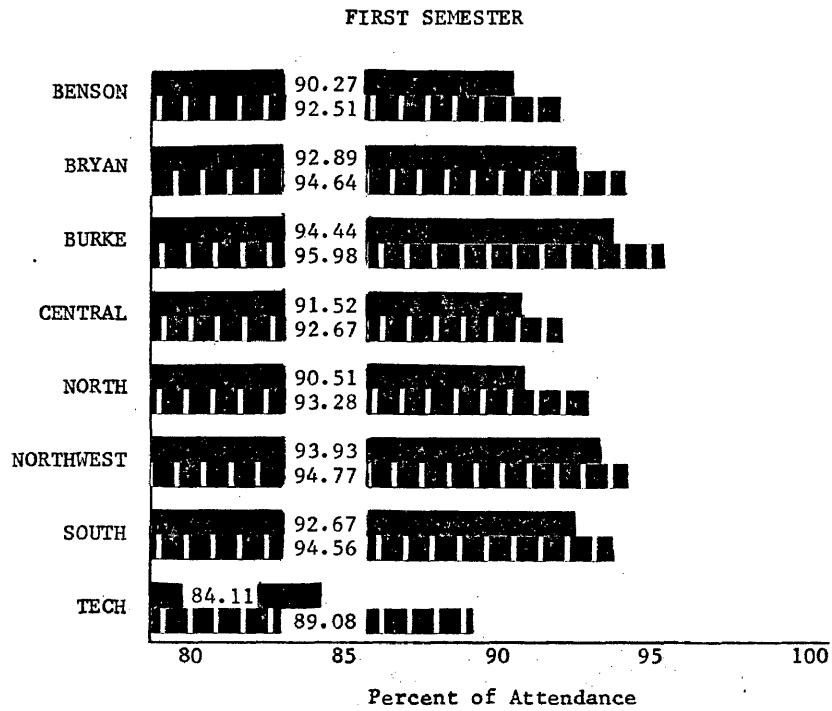
Enrollments at Tech High School, however, are increasing as is the attendance in general. The most significant improvement in attendance of all the schools in Omaha came about at Tech. The 4.97 percent for first semester and 5.54 percent increase for second semester of 1975-76 showed a vast improvement in over-all school attendance.

From the Tables presented in this chapter, it can be noted that each of the eight high schools did in fact improve their over-all attendance in 1975-76 over the same time period in 1974-75.

Figures on the next page compare, in line graph form, each school's attendance by first and second semester of 1974-75 and 1975-76. The percent of the average daily attendance is shown in the middle of the graph of each of the schools listed for the two years. The total increases in all attendance can be clearly understood by comparing school to school, semester to semester, and year to year.

Figure 1

COMPARISON OF ATTENDANCE BY SCHOOLS FOR 1974-75 AND 1975-76



■ Percent Average Daily Attendance 1974-75

▤ Percent Average Daily Attendance 1975-76

CHAPTER V

SUMMARY, CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

I. SUMMARY

The purpose of this study was to compare and review the attendance policy and procedures of the high schools in the Omaha Public School System, comparing results of each of the high schools' attendance.

The Study. The literature reviewed was chosen to show the relationship between attendance problems of many years past and today. The trends of absences across the nation compares with the same kinds of absences locally.

A comparison of the school years 1974-75 attendance with the new 1975-76 attendance policy was the basis for this study.

The Procedure. It is clear to observe that the attendance figures in each of the eight Omaha Public High Schools did, in fact, improve during the 1975-76 school year. The improvement was largely due in part to the work and pressure of teachers, counselors, and administrators. The mere fact that students were placed with the responsibility of attending school regularly or be dropped from a class or classes does help in creating adult judgments relative to missing or skipping school. Telephone calls and letters were sent out at five, ten, and twelve absences. Communication during those various times helped encourage good attendance habits.

II. CONCLUSIONS

The following conclusions are based on the results of the findings and data presented in these chapters.

1. The majority of administrators in the high schools of the Omaha Public School System favor the new attendance policy even though it has created more work for all concerned.
2. Attendance in each of the eight high schools improved from 1974-75 to 1975-76 largely due to the new twelve day absence limit.
3. There is no sure fire way or method of getting all students to attend school regularly but placing a maximum number of days a student may miss before being penalized does help over-all school attendance as illustrated in each of the final figures by schools.
4. The data displayed did, in fact, show the success at each of the high schools. It is hoped it did give confidence to the reader with regard to his belief in the new policy.

III. RECOMMENDATIONS

The following recommendations are based on the evidence presented throughout the description of the attendance policy. An attempt was made to describe the new attendance policy so that it could easily be adaptable to any school district.

1. The students should be made to feel a sense of responsibility. He should be made to feel that his presence in class is important and he is needed.
2. Truancy should be treated as a symptom of a problem that needs to be dealt with. It may indicate an emotional problem, a family problem, a learning disability, or ineffective teaching.
3. The student should relate attendance to the total pattern of

his learning needs. The components being; (a) identification of a problem, (b) planning the solution, (c) carrying out the solution, and (d) evaluating the results and the process.

4. The foundation of an effective attendance policy must be in the practices of the classroom teacher. Each teacher should develop course objectives, outlines and classroom management procedures according to the needs of the course content.

5. The success of the twelve day attendance policy rests on communication. The parent and/or student is responsible for communicating with the teacher, counselor or administrator. If that responsibility is not fulfilled, then a school official should check into the absence at once, not let days go by unchecked.

6. Accurate record keeping is a must if a program like the one described is to work successfully. Teachers have to be made to realize the importance of very concise and accurate roll taking.

7. Personal contact with a parent either in the form of a conference or phone call will minimize the paper work involved in processing the numerous letters and forms required. Stress should be placed on reducing secretarial work.

8. The twelve day limit on absences should be open to modifications and discussions by school districts seeking to adopt a similar policy. It was merely felt by Omaha Public School administrators that twelve days was too much school to miss and still retain credit for a course.

9. A definite method should be developed by schools relative to appealing grades for certain reasons over and beyond the maximum days missed. All due-process procedures should be fulfilled before dropping any student from a class or classes.

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APPENDIX A. SOUTH HIGH SCHOOL ATTENDANCE REFERRAL CARD

SOUTH HIGH ATTENDANCE REFERRAL

Student's Name Grade

Subject Period Teacher

Absent

5 days dates

Contact

10 days dates

Contact

12 days dates

Conference

COUNSELOR

Student's Name

Last Name First

APPENDIX B. APPEAL FORM FOR TEACHERS TO USE IF A
STUDENT HAS MISSED OVER TWELVE DAYS.

 Student (Last name first)

 Teacher signature

 Subject

 Times
Absent from
Class

 Date of Appeal

It is recommended that the above named student be given consideration for a passing grade even though he or she has exceeded the maximum twelve days absence rule.

 Approved
for credit

 Not approved
for credit

 Date of appeal decision

 Administrator Signature

 (Teacher copy)

 Student (Last name first)

 Teacher signature

 Subject

 Times
Absent from
Class

 Date of Appeal

 Approved
for credit

 Not approved
for credit

 Date of appeal decision

 Administrator Signature

(Cumulative Record Copy)

APPENDIX C. ORIGINAL OPINIONNAIRE SENT TO ALL
SECONDARY BUILDING ADMINISTRATORS
REGARDING THE NEW ATTENDANCE POLICY.

Semester

<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
1	2

Check One

<input type="checkbox"/>	Principal
<input type="checkbox"/>	Assistant Principal

The Omaha Public Schools have attempted to standardize high school policies governing attendance and tardiness. With regard to your school building, do you think it is a good policy?

<input type="checkbox"/>	Yes
<input type="checkbox"/>	No

Do you think the policy has established better lines of communication between home and school?

<input type="checkbox"/>	Significantly better
<input type="checkbox"/>	About the same as before
<input type="checkbox"/>	Decreased communication

How much time do you find yourself spending with attendance?

<input type="checkbox"/>	More than last year
<input type="checkbox"/>	Same as last year
<input type="checkbox"/>	Less than last year

Do you think that the majority of your student body is aware of the policy by now?

<input type="checkbox"/>	Yes
<input type="checkbox"/>	No

In your dealings with the faculty about this attendance policy, do you think they favor it?

<input type="checkbox"/>	Most seem to
<input type="checkbox"/>	Pretty well split
<input type="checkbox"/>	Most oppose it

In your opinion, do you believe that student attendance will increase because of the adopted policy?

<input type="checkbox"/>	Yes
<input type="checkbox"/>	Maybe
<input type="checkbox"/>	No

Do you have any suggestions that would improve the policy as it exists? Please use back of page.

APPENDIX D. LETTERS SENT TO PARENTS CONCERNING ATTENDANCE.

SOUTH HIGH SCHOOL
LEONARD E. HANSON, PRINCIPAL
4519 SOUTH 24TH STREET
OMAHA, NEBRASKA 68107

August 10, 1976

Dear Mr. and Mrs. Smith:

Bobby's has been absent from school 6 days this school year. Regular attendance is of utmost importance if a student expects to receive a creditable grade or even to pass a course.

If a student is absent from school twelve days during a semester, it is possible he or she will be withdrawn from school.

Please call me at 733-4990, extension 28 to provide additional information concerning Bobby's attendance.

Sincerely,

Robert Whitehouse
Assistant Principal

sg

SOUTH HIGH SCHOOL
LEONARD E. HANSON, PRINCIPAL
4519 SOUTH 24TH STREET
OMAHA, NEBRASKA 68107

August 10, 1976

Dear Mr. and Mrs. Tate:

Your son/daughter, Maureen, has been absent from school/some classes 12 times this semester. Because of this excessive absenteeism, Maureen, will be considered to be on a "probationary" status. This means that it is unlikely he/she will earn credit in classes missed more than 12 times.

Students on probationary status may be considered for credit if their teachers wish to appeal the giving of a failing grade. An appeal would be made only if all work is completed satisfactorily.

If Maureen continues to be absent from school, we may request permission to withdraw him/her for the remainder of this semester. If you have further questions, please call me at 733-4990 extension 28.

Sincerely,

Robert Whitehouse
Assistant Principal

sg

APPENDIX E. BULLETIN STATEMENT TO TEACHERS AND STUDENT BODY.

SOUTH HIGH SCHOOL
LEONARD E. HANSON, PRINCIPAL
4519 SOUTH 24TH STREET
OMAHA, NEBRASKA 68107

TO: Student Body
FROM: Administration
DATE: September 12, 1975
SUBJECT: New Policy Changes

ATTENDANCE: Regular attendance is of utmost importance if a student expects to receive a creditable grade or even pass a course.

A student who misses twelve days in any class during a semester may be withdrawn from that class unless the absence has resulted from an extended illness or extenuating circumstances; the validity of such circumstances will be determined by school authorities.

If a student is absent from school twelve days, it is possible he or she will be withdrawn from school. Each case will be reviewed and all due process procedures will be followed by school authorities. A parent or guardian will be notified by telephone, written letter from a teacher, counselor, or administrator, or conference at school before withdrawal will occur.

The same policy will be in effect concerning tardies to school in the morning, after 12 tardies a student can expect to be withdrawn.

You are placed with more responsibility than ever before to maintain a good attendance record and to be punctual.

LUNCH: During Lunch time students should NOT:

- (1) go to the cafeteria unless they plan to eat,
- (2) break the lunch line,
- (3) reserve table space for friends without trays,
- (4) stand while talking or eating ice cream cones,
- (5) add a seventh chair to a table, or
- (6) loiter in cafeteria after finishing the meal.

Please help the efficiency of the lunch lines by having money or lunch card ready for the cashier; return your tray (or empty milk carton) upon finishing your meal and help dispose of the refuse in the proper receptacle. Please help by maintaining acceptable table manners and enjoy your lunch as well as allow others to enjoy their lunch.

Students out of the building without authorization over the noon hour can expect to be suspended.

CYCLES: Motorcycle drivers are asked to review their code and avoid completely driving on the sidewalks--this lack of judgment can be disastrous!

SOUTH HIGH SCHOOL
LEONARD E. HANSON, PRINCIPAL
4519 SOUTH 24TH STREET
OMAHA, NEBRASKA 68107

SPECIAL BULLETIN TO TEACHERS:

Students who have more than twelve days absence must be reviewed according to the following criteria:

1. What are the reasons for absence.
2. Has work been completed for absences.
3. Students who have not been in class attendance because of a school related activity must have had an opportunity to make up work. If work was not made up, the student would receive a grade of zero for that day. If assignments were made up, that grade would be recorded (the student is not penalized for an absence due to a school related activity if work is made up).
4. If a student's record merits consideration for a passing grade the teacher must make an appeal to the administrator in charge by filling out the appropriate form and turning the form in to the administrator by 2:00 P.M. on Friday, January 23.

Grades for students in an "appeal status" should not be filled in on grade sheets until a final confirmation has been received from an administrator. Grade sheets will be submitted, however, at the designated time omitting grades for "appeal" students if necessary.

The above statements do not pertain to students missing less than thirteen days.

APPENDIX F. ARTICLE THAT APPEARED IN THE
MARCH 11, 1976 ISSUE OF THE
NORTH OMAHA SUN NEWSPAPER.

New OPS policy takes hold; absences down

Confrontations between a truant officer and a student playing "hooky" from school are comical when illustrated in the comic strips. School absenteeism isn't a laughing matter in real life, however.

Officials in the Omaha Public Schools considered absenteeism and tardiness in local schools serious enough to establish districtwide attendance guidelines for the 1975-76 school year. A general policy for OPS senior high schools was adopted last summer and the administration of that policy is left up to each individual school.

At Northwest High, first semester figures indicate that the percentage of students attending classes was the highest in the school's five-year history. Student at-

tendance during the first semester of the current academic year averaged 94.8 per cent, compared to the 92.9 per cent attendance rate recorded last year and 93.8 per cent during the 1973-74 school year.

THAT INCREASE was part of an overall trend in the eight high schools operated by OPS. Attendance figures for the first semester were tabulated last week by the district's research department. They show an overall daily attendance rate of 93.88 per cent. That's a jump of nearly three percentage points over the daily attendance recorded during the 1974-75 school year.

Northwest principal Jack Hallstrom said the percentage of increased attendance was considerable when student enrollments were taken into consideration. Northwest had

1,333 students in 1973-74, 1,396 last year and this year the student population grew to 1,544 students. Despite the larger student body this year, though, student absences totaled 7,419 during the past semester. That's approximately 65 less absences than were recorded in 1974-75 and 25 less than during 1973-74.

The OPS policy states that senior high students will lose credit for a class if they miss that class 12 days during a single semester. Cases of extended illness or extenuating circumstances are reviewed by school authorities.

ONLY 74 STUDENTS missed 12 days of class or more at Northwest High during the first semester, a percentage of .048. Twelve-time absentees were nearly twice as common during the

first semesters of the previous two school years. Perfect-attendance students numbered 215 this past semester, compared to 179 last year and 142 two years ago.

Why has student attendance increased?

Assistant principal Roger Dawdy said teachers, especially counselors, and staff members have spent a lot of time working on reducing the absentee and tardy rates at the school. The attendance office at the school compiles a daily list of students who are absent and distributes the list to Dawdy and the school's five counselors.

After five absences, a counselor will call the parent or guardian of the often-missing student. When the count for a student reaches 10 absences during a semester,

Dawdy contacts the parents or guardian to arrange a conference at which time the problem is discussed.

"When a kid misses class 10 times in a semester, it's a real danger signal that something is wrong," Dawdy declared. The reasons for the absenteeism might be sickness or personal problems at home or a dislike for the class, he said, but the important thing is to understand the problem.

THE OPS ATTENDANCE policy has had a positive effect, Dawdy believes. "We're more aware and conscious of how much time the kids are in and out of school now," he stated. "There's fewer kids than ever before who are seeking early dismissals. But just as before, the kids who can't afford to miss class are the ones who are taking advantage of the situation."

First-semester grades bear out Dawdy's statement. Only 19 "ones" were given out to students who missed 12 or more days of class. At the other end of the scale, teachers passed out 118 "fives" and 110 "fours" to those who missed 12 or more classes. Grades in past years at Northwest weren't as severe for those with frequent absences.

That pattern was reflected in a 1973 study that surveyed 25,333 students in Nebraska secondary schools. Students with grades of one (A) were likely to miss only 2 days per semester. With a grade of two (B), students missed an average of 2.7 days. Students with grades of three (C) missed 3.5 days, with grades of four (D) 4.8 days and with grades of five (F) 8.9 days.